

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS ABUJA 000974

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCOR](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: GON WITHDRAWS MINISTERIAL CORRUPTION CHARGES

REF: A. ABUJA 903

[1](#)B. ABUJA 764

[1](#)C. ABUJA 35

[1](#)D. 03 ABUJA 2080

[1](#)1. The Nigerian government's prosecutor withdrew the corruption charges against six senior ex-officials of the GON June 2, and Abuja High Court Judge Mudashiru Oniyangi dismissed the case. Labor Minister Hussein Akwanga had been indicted, then fired, in December 2003, clearing the way for Akwanga, former Interior Ministers Mohammed Shata and Sunday Afolabi, Interior Ministry PermSec Akerele, former state governor and past Secretary of the ruling PDP Okwesilieze Nwodo, and Interior Ministry Director Christopher Agidi to be tried on 16 counts of corruption in a scandal over Nigeria's National ID Card project (Refs B-D). The core charge was that the ministers and their collaborators allegedly received over USD 2 million from a Nigerian business partner of the French firm Sagem S.A. to ensure Sagem won the USD 214 million National ID Card project contract.

[1](#)2. The accused received bail, and the trial has been postponed several times since December. The judge and prosecution team were both changed. Indicted ex-Minister Afolabi died May 10 under strange circumstances in London (Ref A). Although the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) may re-file charges against the five who survived, Judge Oniyangi freed the suspects from any remaining bail restrictions and returned their passports.

[1](#)3. COMMENT: The six, now five, were the most senior group of officials ever indicted in the Obasanjo administration's "war on corruption." Post analysis of the prosecutor's dropping of the case and future prospects will follow septel. CAMPBELL